

16th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

Dubai, 9-10 March 2022

Statement of

**Mr. Weixiong Chen, Acting Executive Director,
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Your Excellency Mr. Speaker of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates,

Honourable Mr. President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean,

Excellencies, honourable representatives, distinguished colleagues,

I am delighted to join you for this opening of the 16th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

Allow me to congratulate the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates for hosting this meeting. CTED currently has the privilege of working closely with the United Arab Emirates within the framework of its membership of the Security Council.

Parliamentarians and parliamentary assemblies are close and essential partners of CTED.

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

The Council also encourages CTED to cooperate with Member States and international, regional, and subregional organizations, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, to assess existing strategies and advise on formulating comprehensive and integrated national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

Second, the Council urges Member States not to lower their guard with respect to the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. The Council expresses grave concern over FTFs seeking to return to their countries of origin or nationality, or to relocate to third countries.

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CTED conducts expert assessment visits to Member States on behalf of the Committee in monitoring, promoting and facilitating Member States' implementation of the relevant Council resolutions.

Allow me to briefly outline three challenges identified through our assessments.

The first challenge is data-protection and information-sharing with respect to biometric data; passenger data; financial intelligence; and data collected through special investigative techniques. Although there has been considerable technological progress, many States have yet to develop the laws and policies required to ensure that these new tools are used effectively, appropriately, and responsibly.

Parliaments could play a significant role in ensuring that these new tools are employed in a manner that is compliant with the rule of law. CTED and its partners recently prepared a compendium of good practices on the use of biometrics, and we are in the process of preparing a similar tool on data protection.

The second challenge is the drafting and implementation of comprehensive and tailored strategies for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of suspected terrorists, including individuals who return from the conflict zones. Parliaments can ensure that such strategies are effectively monitored in full respect for international human rights law.

The third challenge relates to family members associated with FTFs, especially children, and the various roles that women have played in terrorist organizations and activities. Again, the efforts of parliamentarians in this regard are key to identifying and sharing good practices.

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We are confronted with unprecedented new and emerging terrorist threats, coupled with the severe impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

We must continue to work together, learn from each other's experiences and effective practices. In this regard, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean continues to serve as a vital platform for this exchange and collective learning.

I wish you every success in your deliberations over the next two days.